

Peer Observer Research Grant

Initial Findings

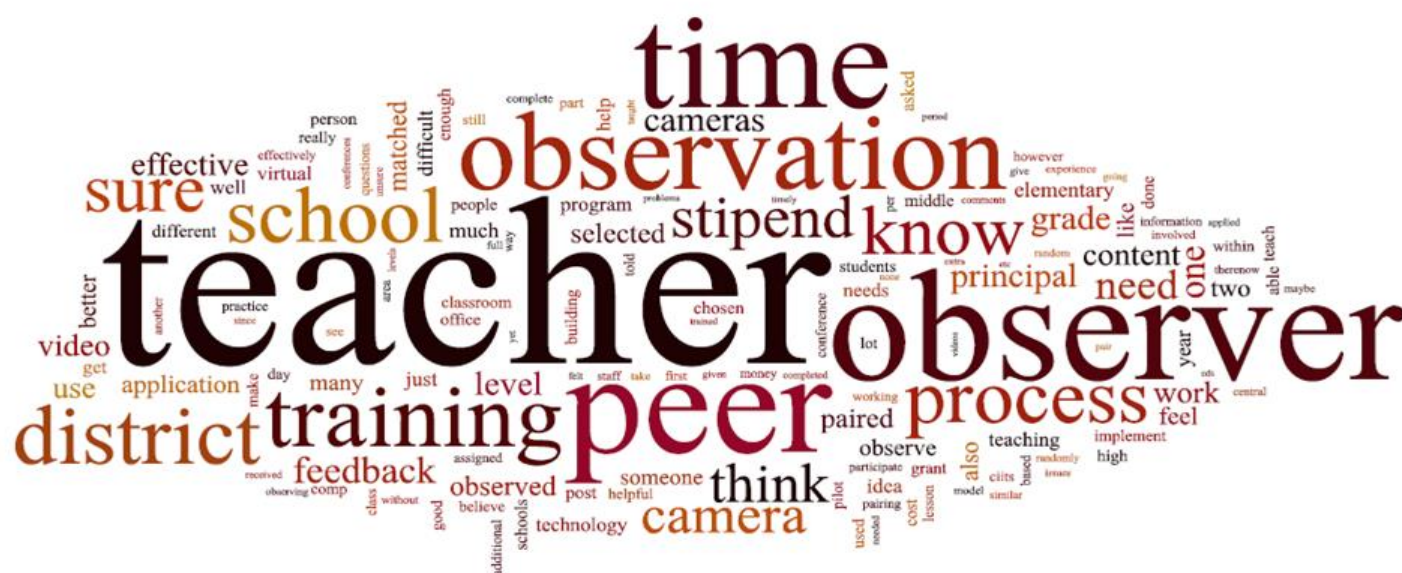


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Synopsis

Progress on Project Deliverables

The Kentucky Peer Observation Research Grant deliverables:

1. A cadre of teachers across the state knowledgeable and able to articulate the role of peer observation in teacher effectiveness and support, best practices for productive feedback, and the use of technology to build capacity and increase access to effective observation
2. An enhanced technological infrastructure to connect peer observation, standards, digitally stored instructional resources, curriculum, formative assessments, instruction, professional learning and evaluation of teachers and principals in one place, thereby improving instructional outcomes, teacher effectiveness and leadership
3. Critical comparison of three models for observation and feedback in authentic settings for the purpose of informing a statewide Professional Growth and Effectiveness System, promising practices for collaborative processes to provide supportive and constructive feedback, and policy options for consideration

Initial Results for each deliverable:

1. Nine Nationally Board Certified Teachers successfully completed Peer Observation Training and conducted 121 peer observations. The Virtual Peer Observers were selected by a team of reviewers after a rigorous application process. The six participating districts assigned the Peer Observers' caseloads. Virtual Observers teach in the following districts: Oldham, Fayette, Todd, Spencer, Corbin Ind. They showed that they were able to conduct observations, provide actionable feedback, and articulate their role to teachers as the year progressed.
2. Due to technical configurations and FERPA regulations, details unassociated with the grant, the Educator Development Suite (EDS) is unable to support cross-district assignment of peer observers to teachers to conduct peer observations. A viable work around is being created so that should a district or school desire to assign an out of district peer to a teacher, such an assignment can take place outside of EDS and still fulfill the requirements of the PGES regulation 704 KAR 3:370.
3. Initial Survey Data results have determined some significant findings. Those findings are detailed on pages 3, 4, 18 and 19. Focus Group results will be analyzed over the summer months and inform implementation of PGES and policy options for consideration.

Items Completed:

March	April	May	June
Interim report on Peer Observation posted to KDE website	District work on CEP regarding Peer Observation	Reflections on Travel Submitted	Districts submitting Certified Evaluation Plans for review by KDE
4 th observation window open	Observation window closed and entered in EDS four of six districts.	Virtual Observers submit final self-report	Observation reports received from ThereNow reporting number of videos uploaded

Upcoming: July – August: Code and summarize Focus Group data

August – September: Answer remaining research questions regarding Peer Observation as it relates to PGES Sources of Evidence.

Surveys and Focus Groups: KDE conducted three surveys and two focus group sessions. Fall and spring survey results are included in this initial report. Focus Group data is being coded and analyzed by KDE over the summer months with an expected release to inform policy decision making in the fall of 2014. See pages 4-19.

Variations in Choosing Peer Observers during the Research Grant: The ways in which the research districts chose peer observers is of particular interest to districts when writing their Certified Evaluation Plans (CEPs). Additionally, one district has prepared a compensation plan for Peer Observers that blends the requirements of PGES with a mentoring program. The findings on that work also are included in the report.

Reflection on Travel: All six districts had the opportunity to travel to other states and learn from their practices of Peer Observation. Those reflections are included here and should be helpful to districts when considering how best to refine implementation of Peer Observation in their school or district. The common theme among all state reflections was that peer observation was being used to build a collegial atmosphere where teachers work together to improve practice.

Links: Kentucky Peer Observation Grant: <http://1drv.ms/1ttUciQ>

KySTE 2014: <http://1drv.ms/1qyEjEh>

Initial Narrative on Surveys

The surveys were designed to assess perception over time. Although there were three observation models being tested, surveys were broken down to more granular groups. Surveys were sent to teachers being observed by one Peer, teachers observed by two Peers, Peer Observers (district and school level), Virtual Observers, Supervisors and Technology Coordinators.

Virtual Observers were assigned six teachers to observe. They were to observe four teachers three times in the academic year utilizing the entire observation cycle of pre- and post-observations. Additionally, they were to observe two additional teachers and provide them a scripted observation with no feedback – just aligned evidence. This heavy caseload was designed to test caseload capacity. Because of this, some select teachers had two observers. The remaining four districts made their own decisions regarding caseload assignment.

Trends on select questions over time:

“Training”: The highest rated response was that educators felt they could articulate the goal of the Peer Observation Process to others. When asked about the effectiveness of the training for peer observers, the response dropped 16-26 percentage points. This is a significant indicator that KDE must undertake revisions to the training to better prepare Peer Observers and Teachers.

“Peer Observation Processes”: Teachers and Peers (more than 90 percent for all surveys) trust the system and believe it to be a confidential partnership. Over the course of the year, there was some inconsistency with adhering to the peer observation protocol of conducting pre- and post-conferences. Reasons include difficulty with technology, inconsistent communication and excessive weather-related school closings. Proper mitigation of these issues can be avoided through scheduled, regular training in the use of the technologies, the creation of a communication map that ensures teachers receive and respond to messaging and the development of a weather-related contingency plan.

“Characteristics of Peer Observations”: Teachers (more than 90 percent for all surveys) believed their observations were unbiased, shared in a professional manner, and teacher-centered. The next steps would be to help peers provide more actionable, researched-based feedback in a timely manner.

“Peer Observations’ Impact”: While teachers believed that Peers impacted their instruction the most, they were not decisive on how that impact to instruction improved them.

“Feasibility”: Most teachers believed they had the resources required to train staff in the appropriate use of the Peer Observation protocol, but probably need more technology, human resources and district support to implement Peer Observation well.

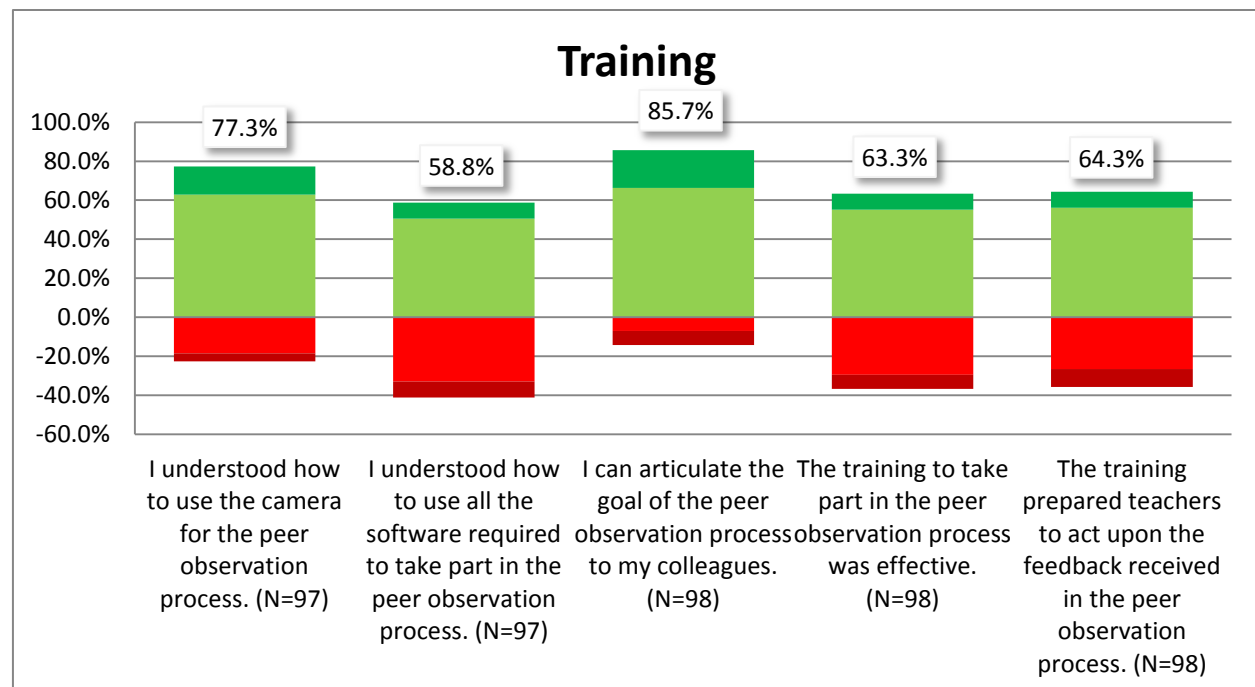
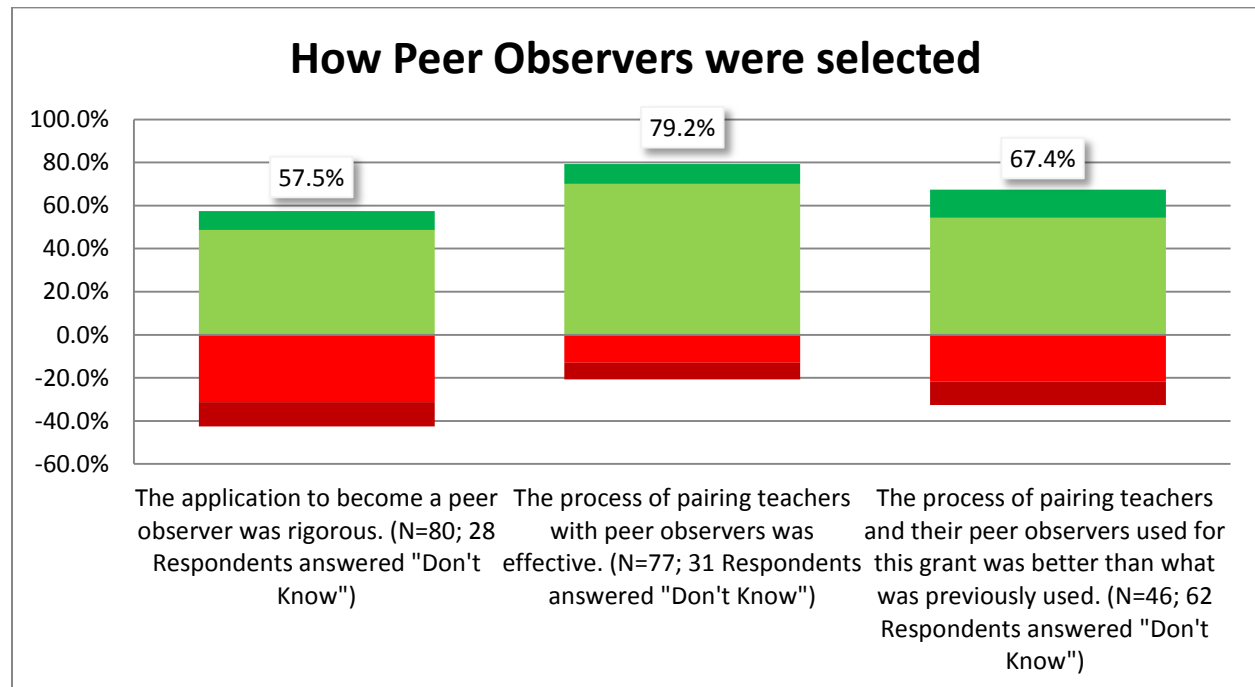
“Types of Assistance Required”: Teachers (more than 90 percent for all surveys) believed they needed additional financial resources, training (80 -90 percent) and procedural guidance (81 -88 percent) to effectively implement the Peer Observation Models.

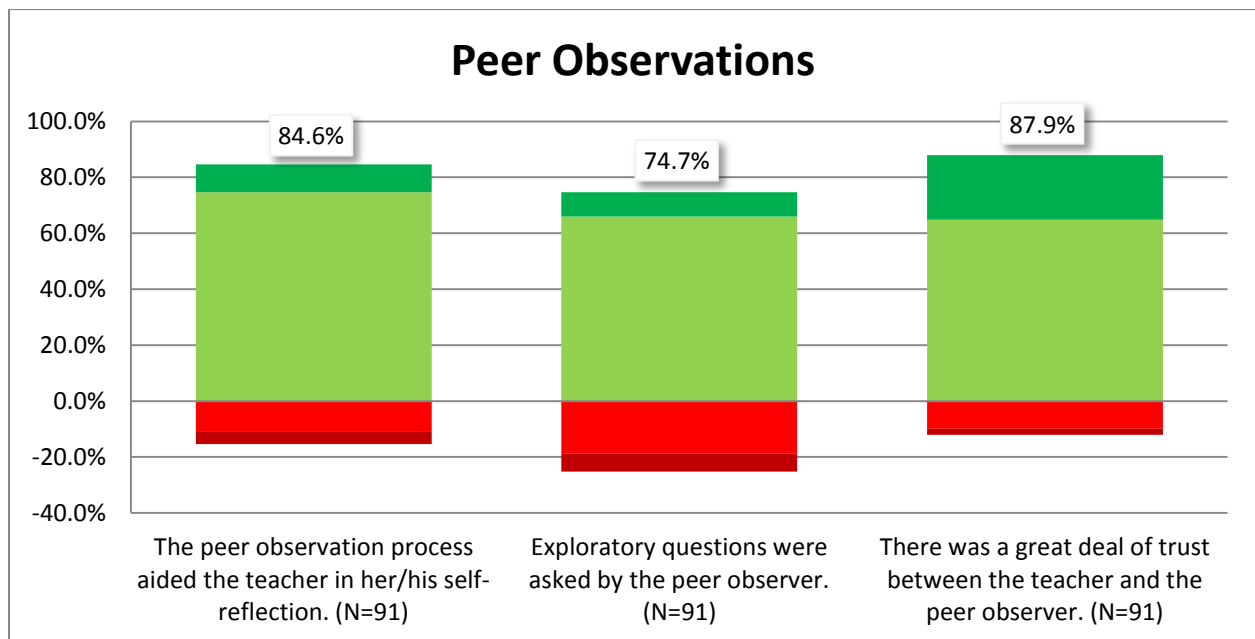
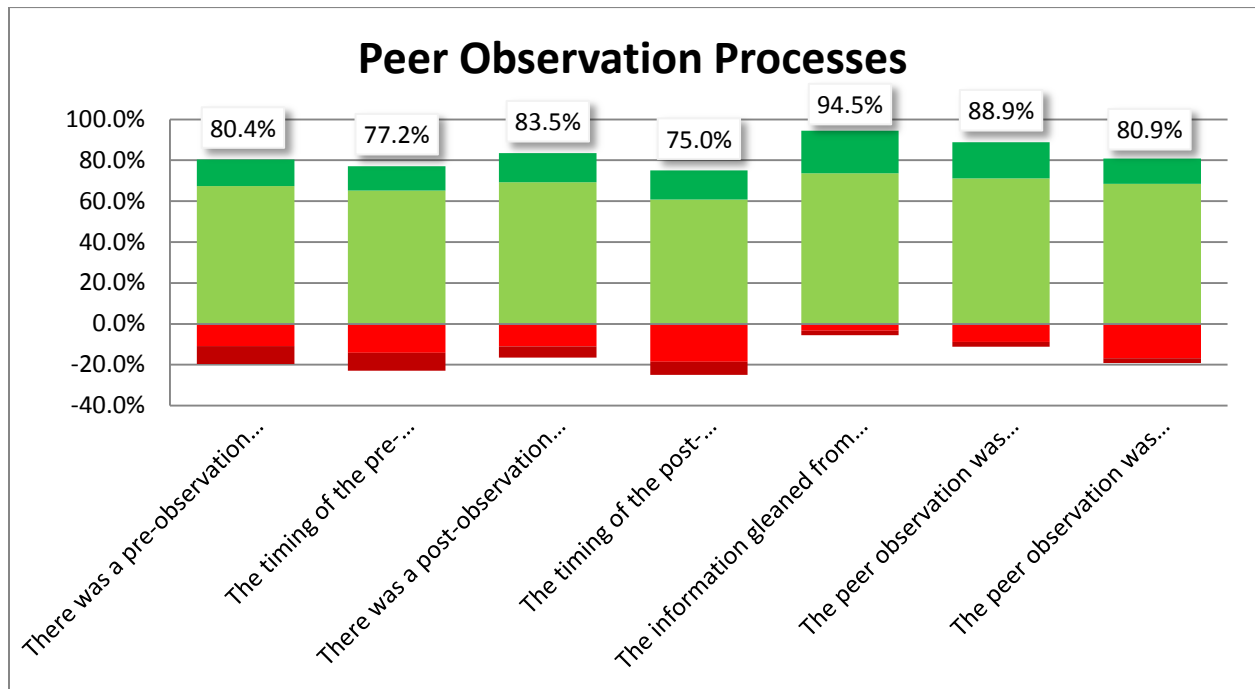
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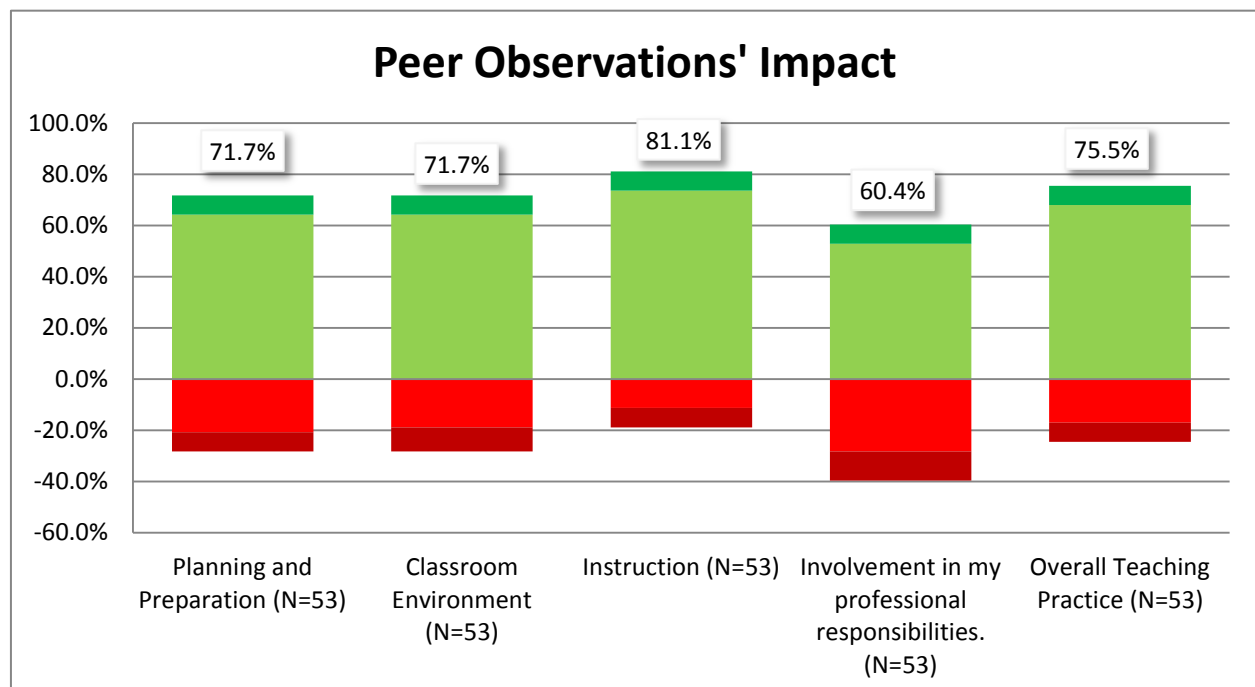
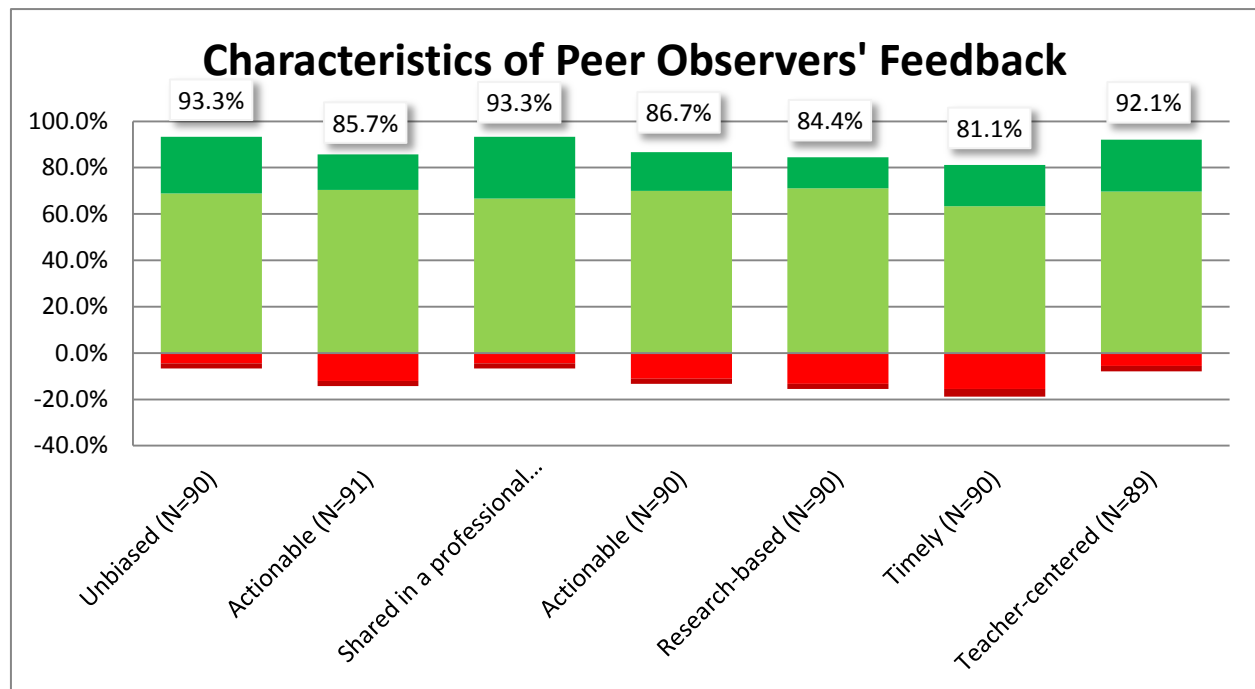
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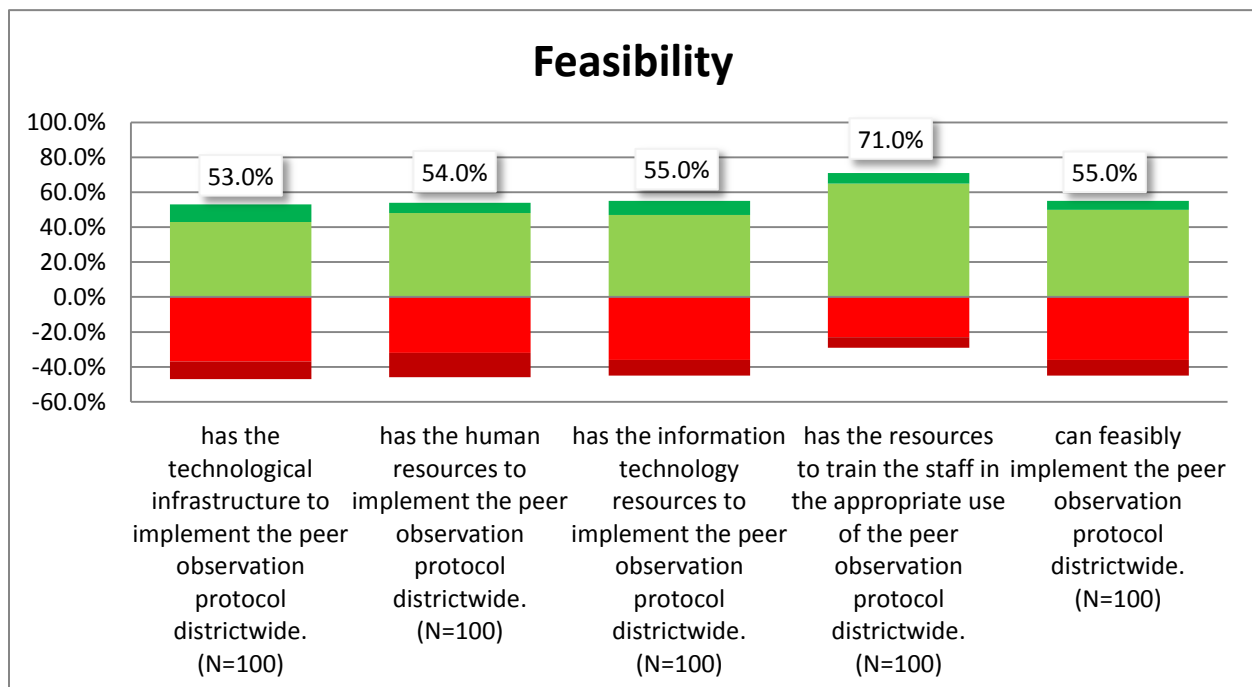
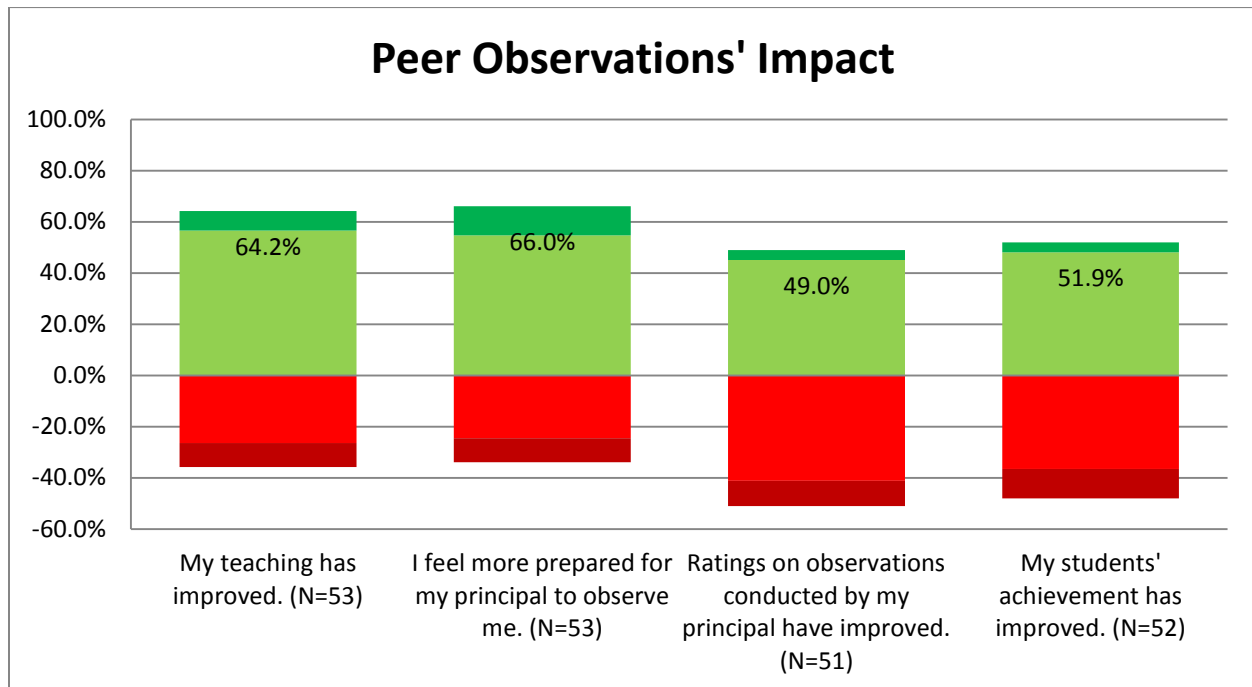
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Fall

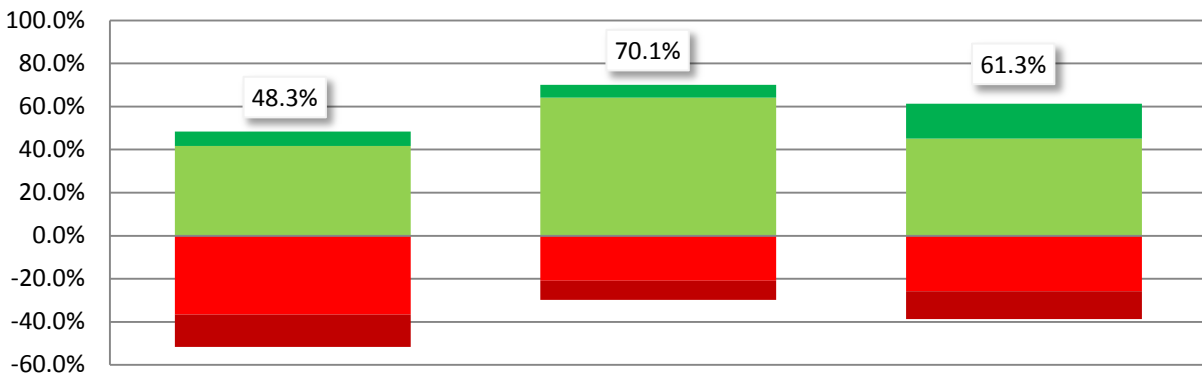








How Peer Observers Were Selected

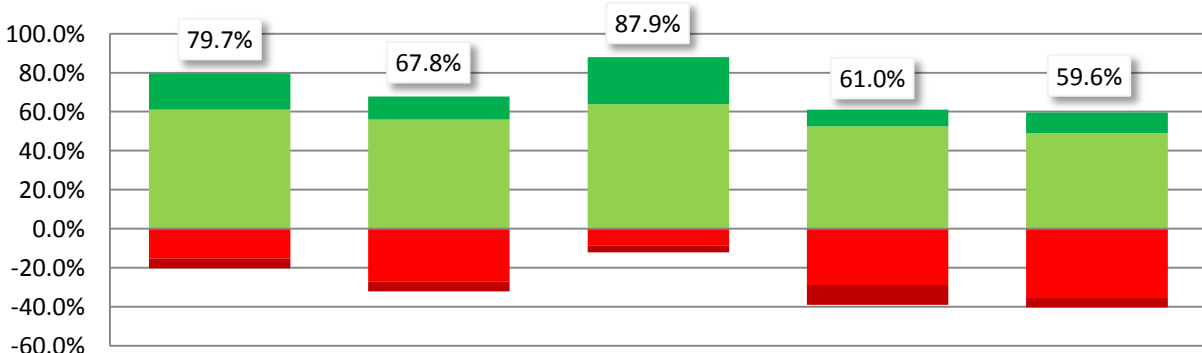


The application to become a peer observer was rigorous. (N=60; 30 Respondents answered "Don't Know")

The process of pairing teachers with peer observers was effective. (N=67; 22 Respondents answered "Don't Know")

The process of pairing teachers and their peer observers used for this grant was better than what was previously used. (N=31; 59 Respondents answered "Don't Know")

Training



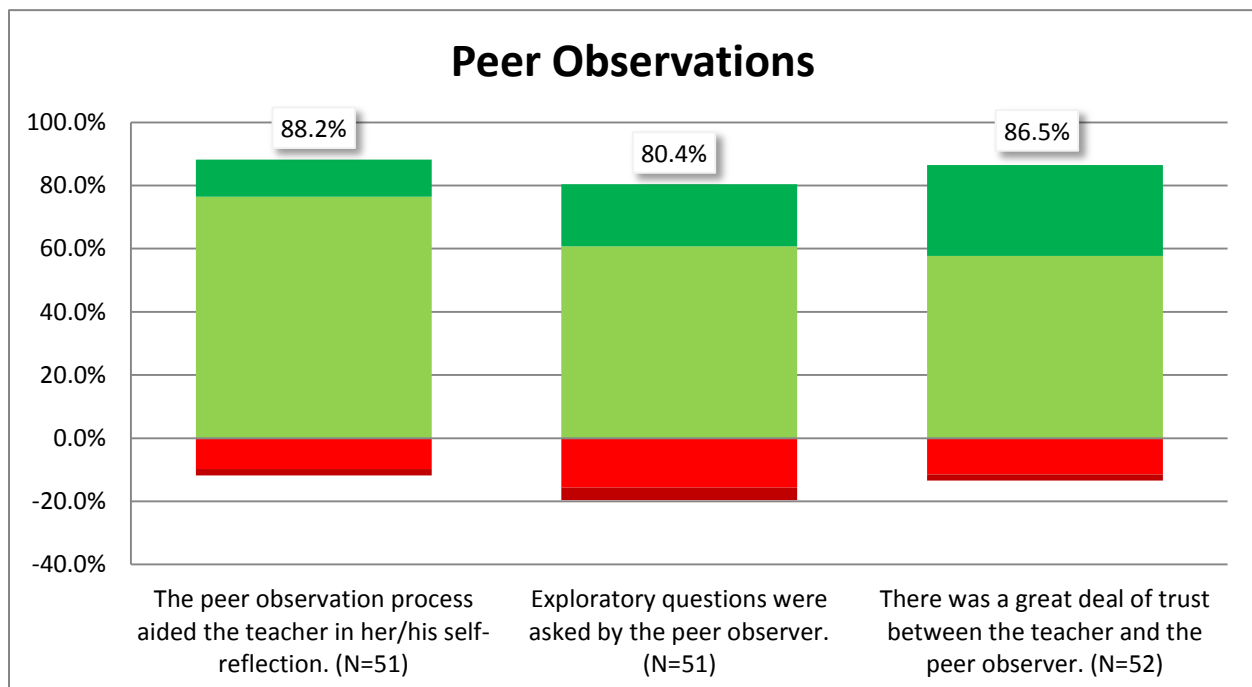
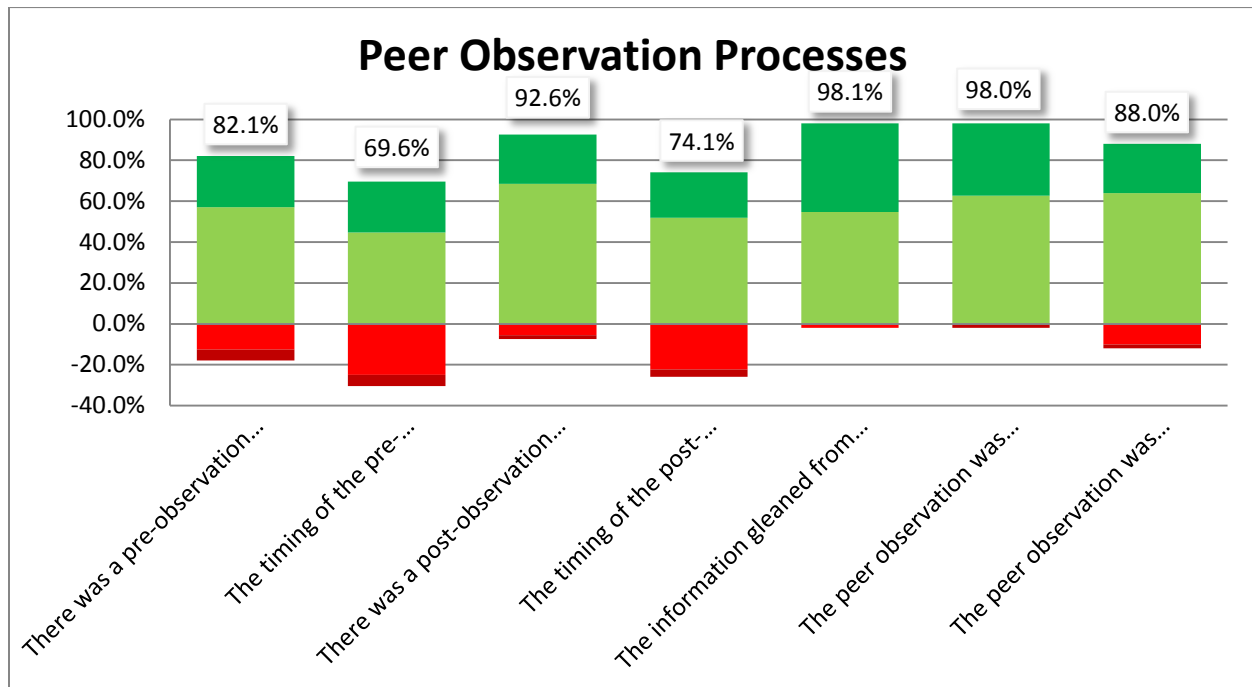
I understood how to use the camera for the peer observation process. (N=59)

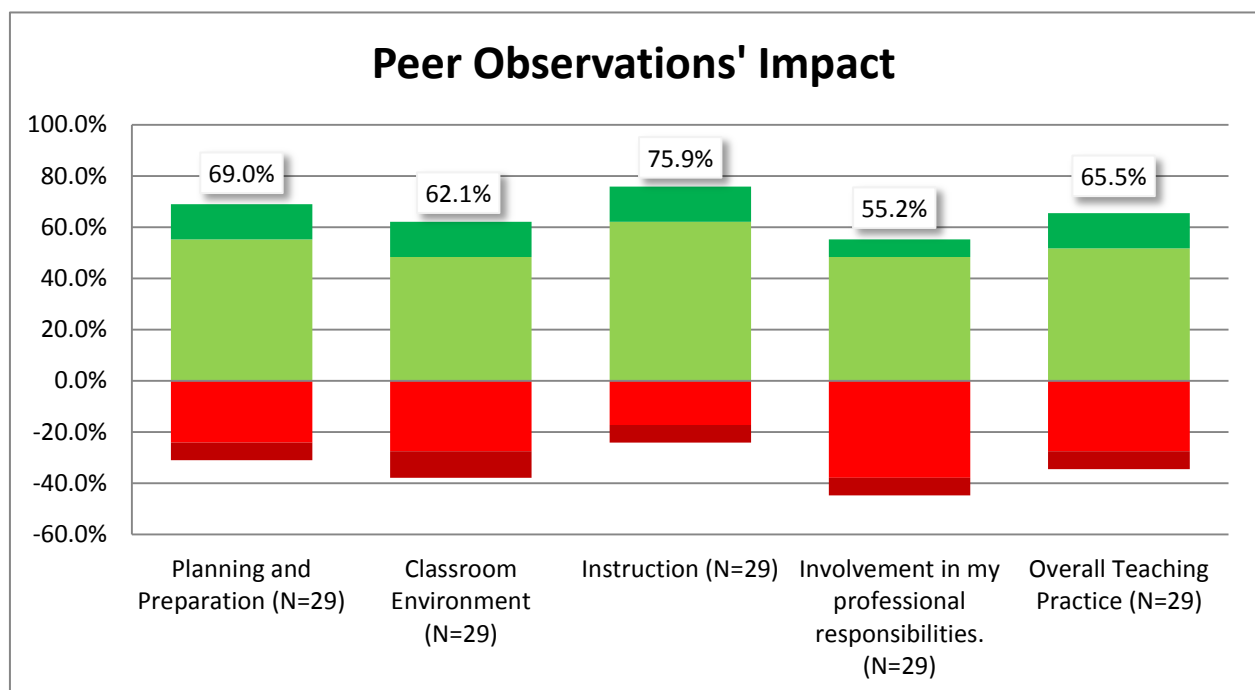
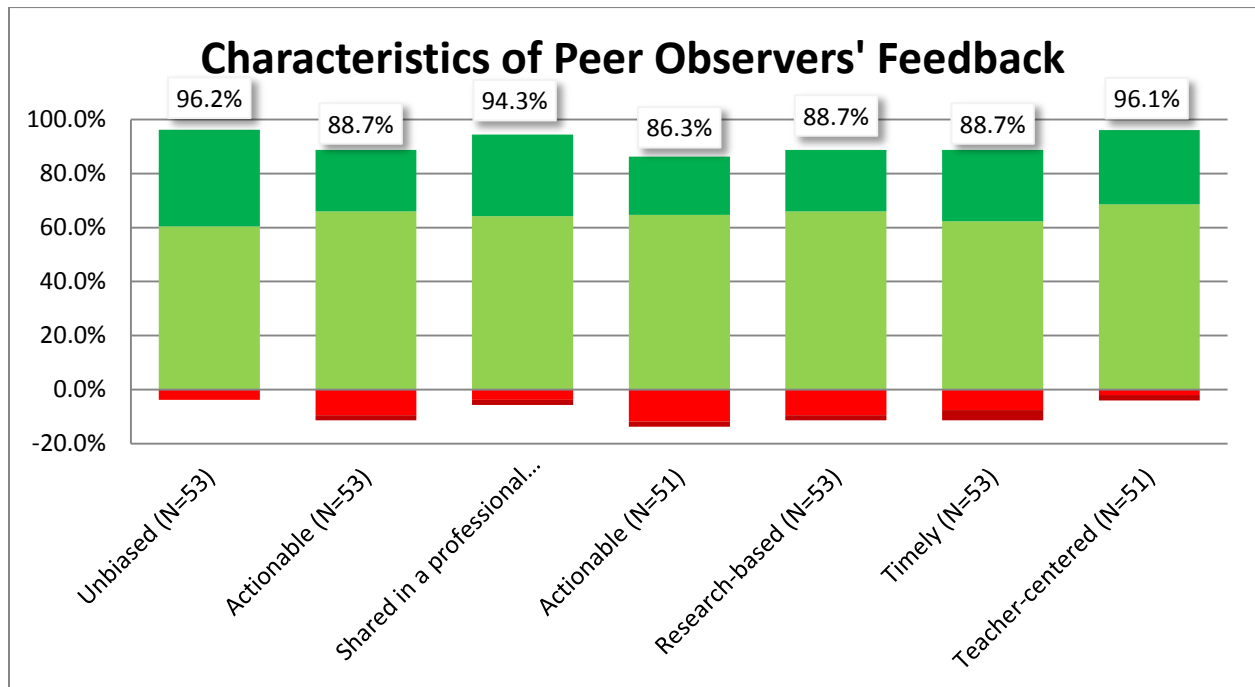
I understood how to use all the software required to take part in the peer observation process. (N=59)

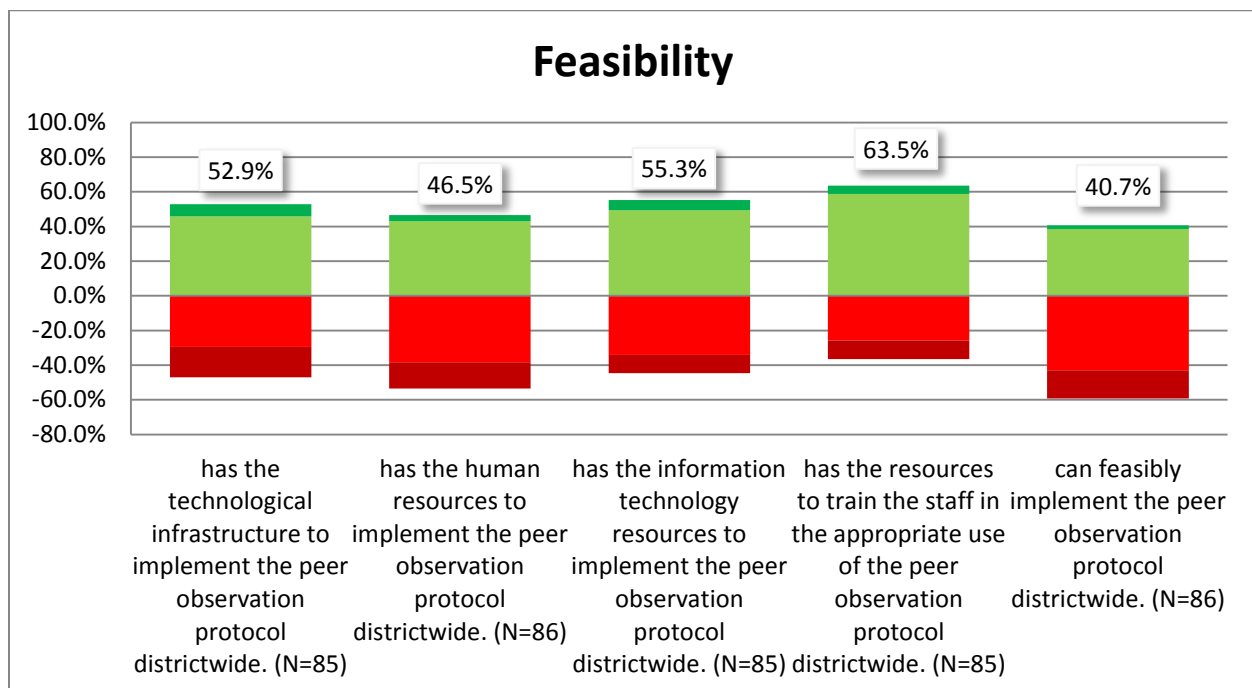
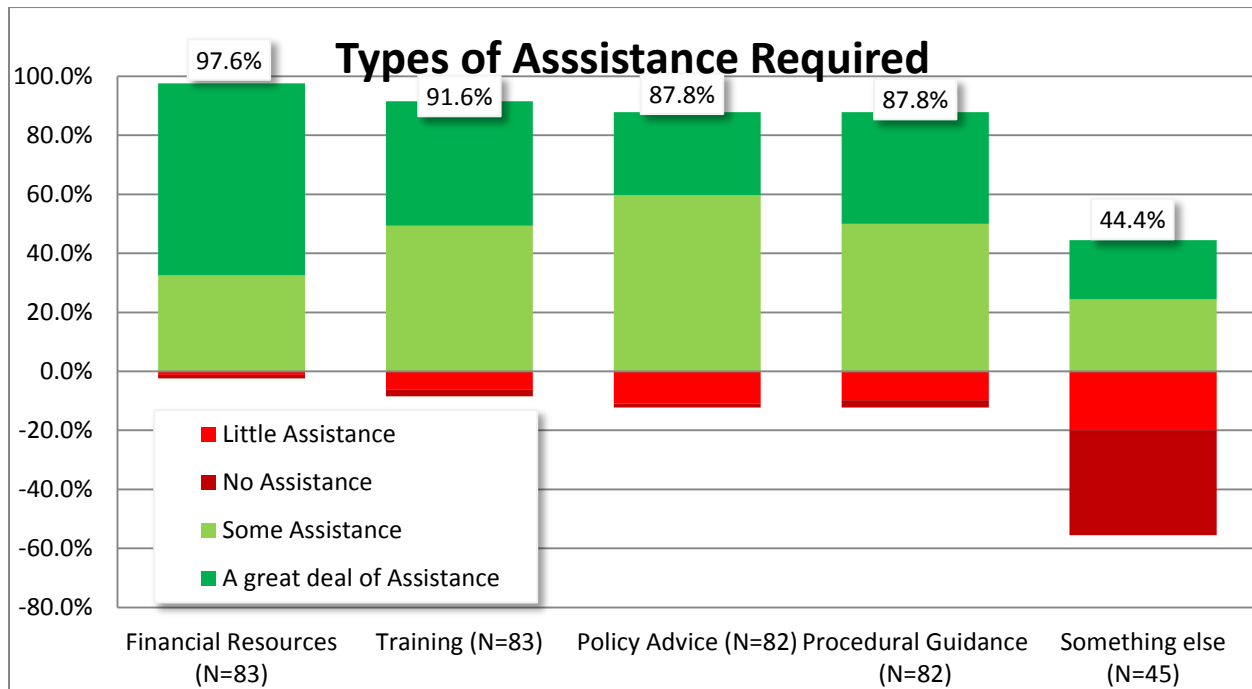
I can articulate the goal of the peer observation process to my colleagues. (N=58)

The training to take part in the peer observation process was effective. (N=59)

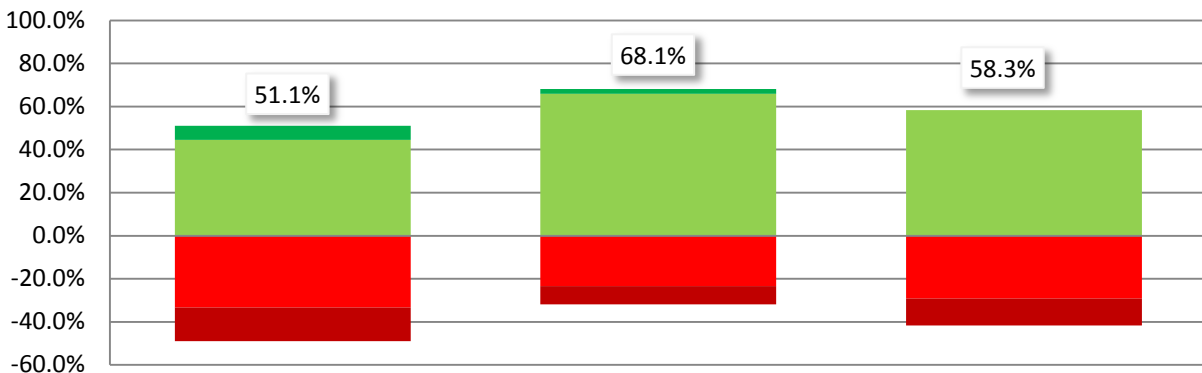
The training prepared teachers to act upon the feedback received in the peer observation process. (N=57)







How Peer Observers were selected

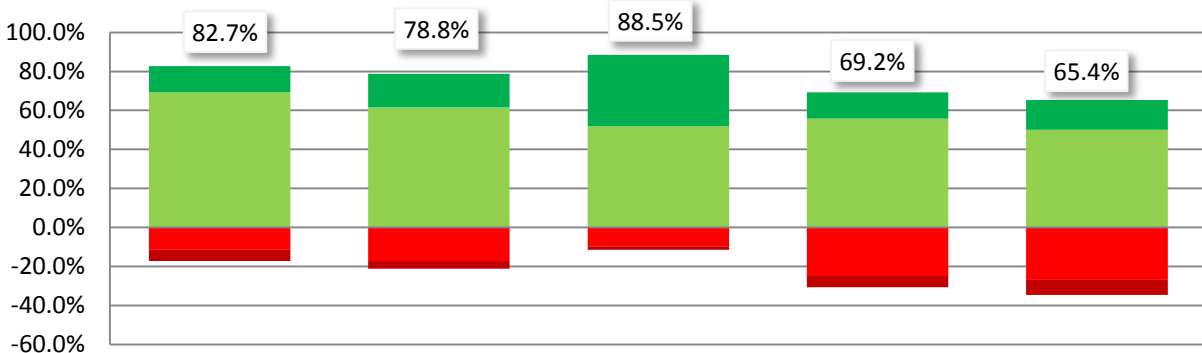


The application to become a peer observer was rigorous. (N=45; 12 Respondents answered "Don't Know")

The process of pairing teachers with peer observers was effective. (N=47; 10 Respondents answered "Don't Know")

The process of pairing teachers and their peer observers used for this grant was better than what was previously used. (N=24; 33 Respondents answered "Don't Know")

Training



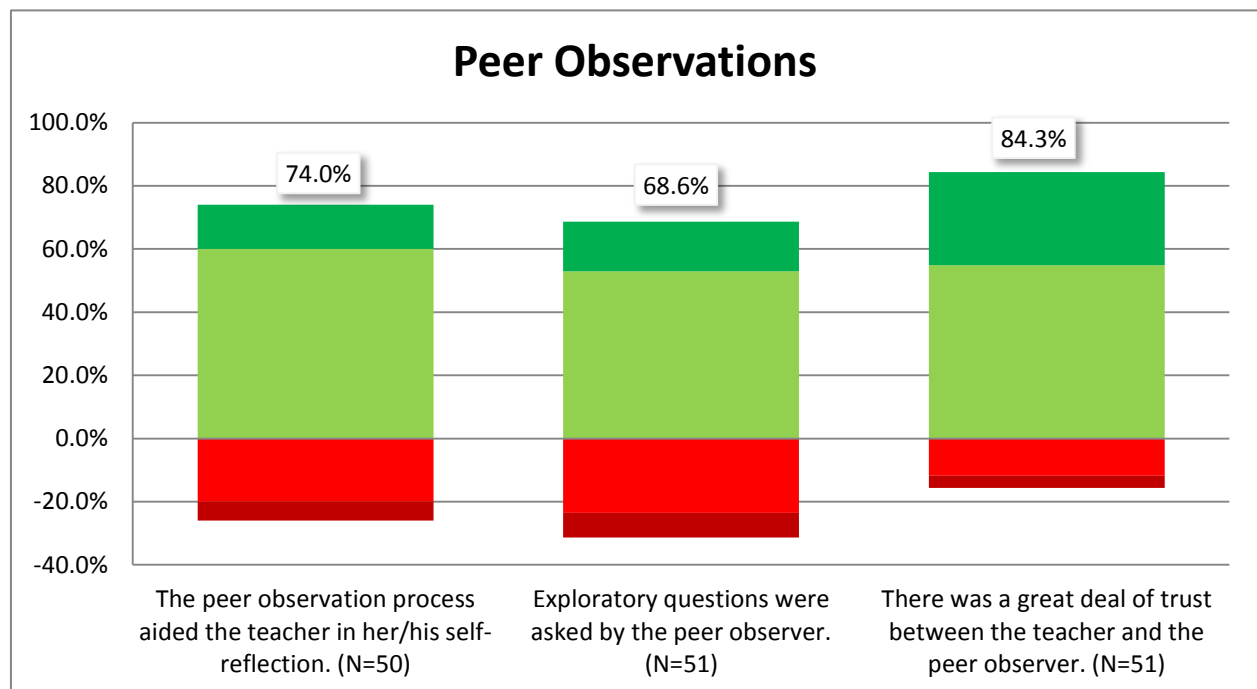
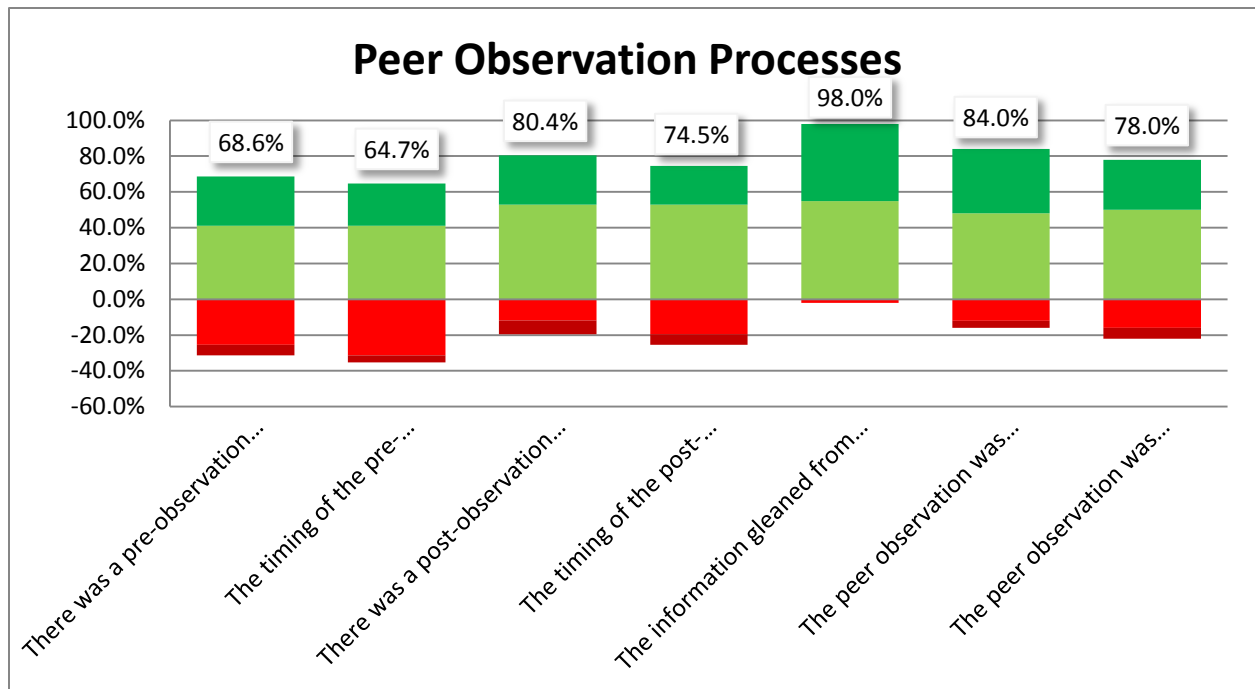
I understood how to use the camera for the peer observation process. (N=52)

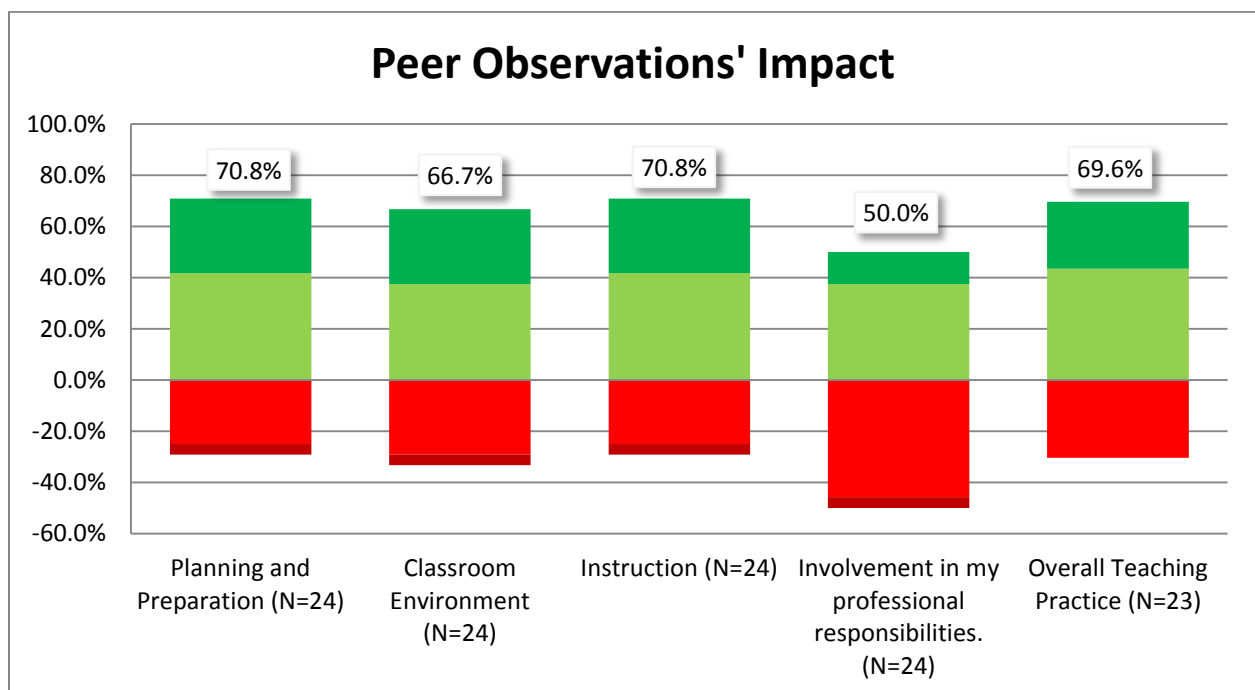
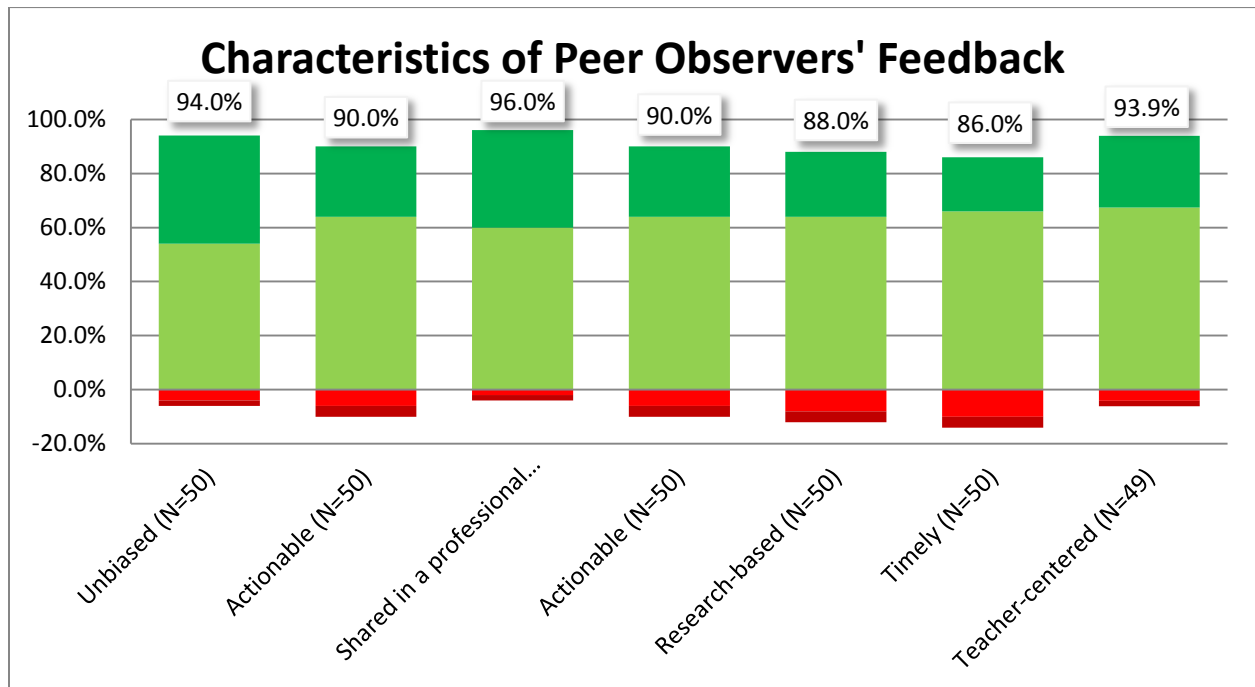
I understood how to use all the software required to take part in the peer observation process. (N=52)

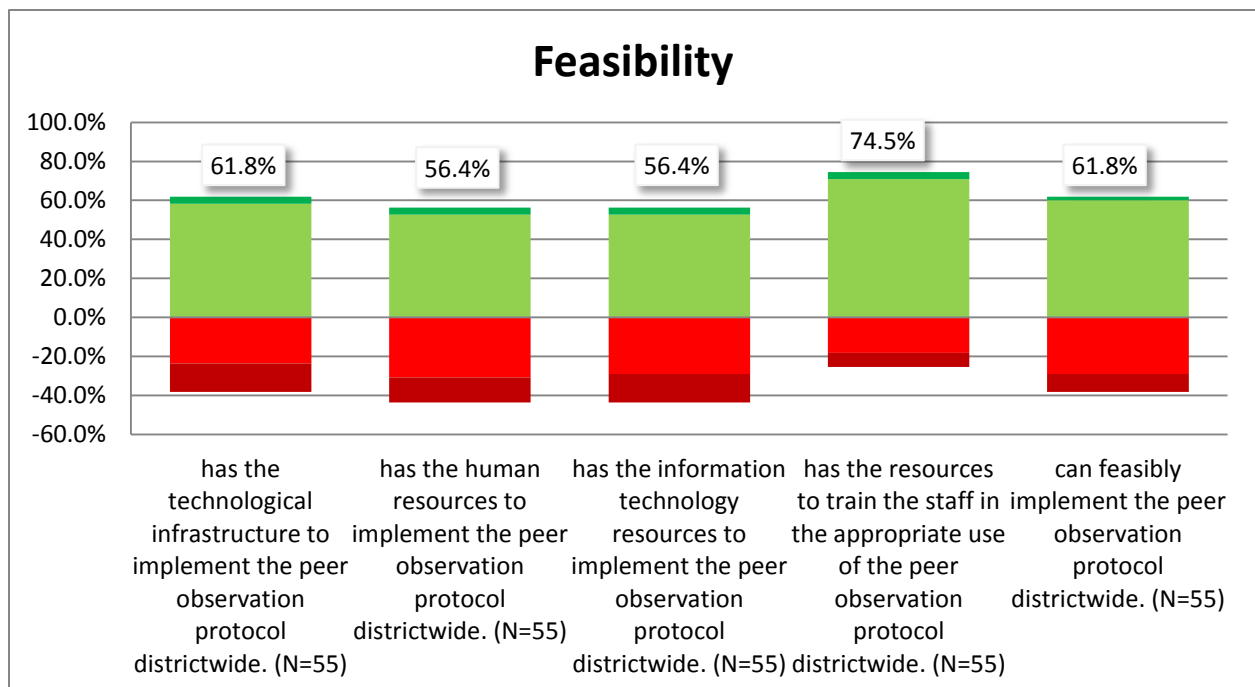
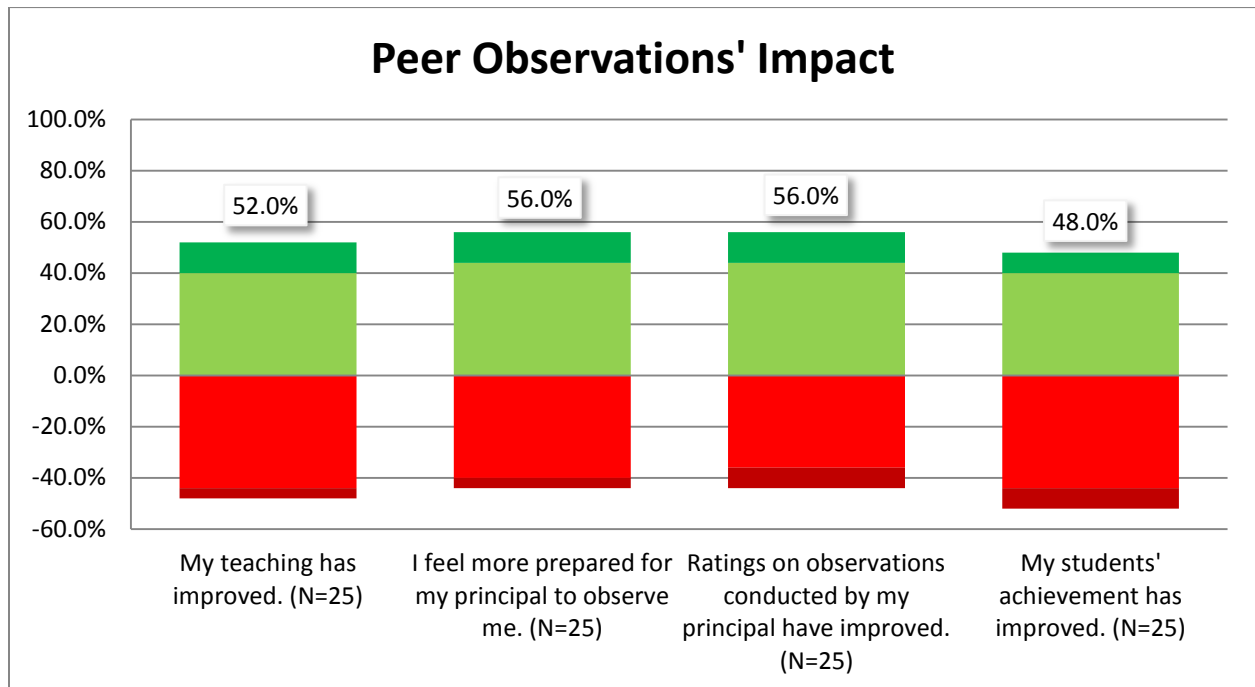
I can articulate the goal of the peer observation process to my colleagues. (N=52)

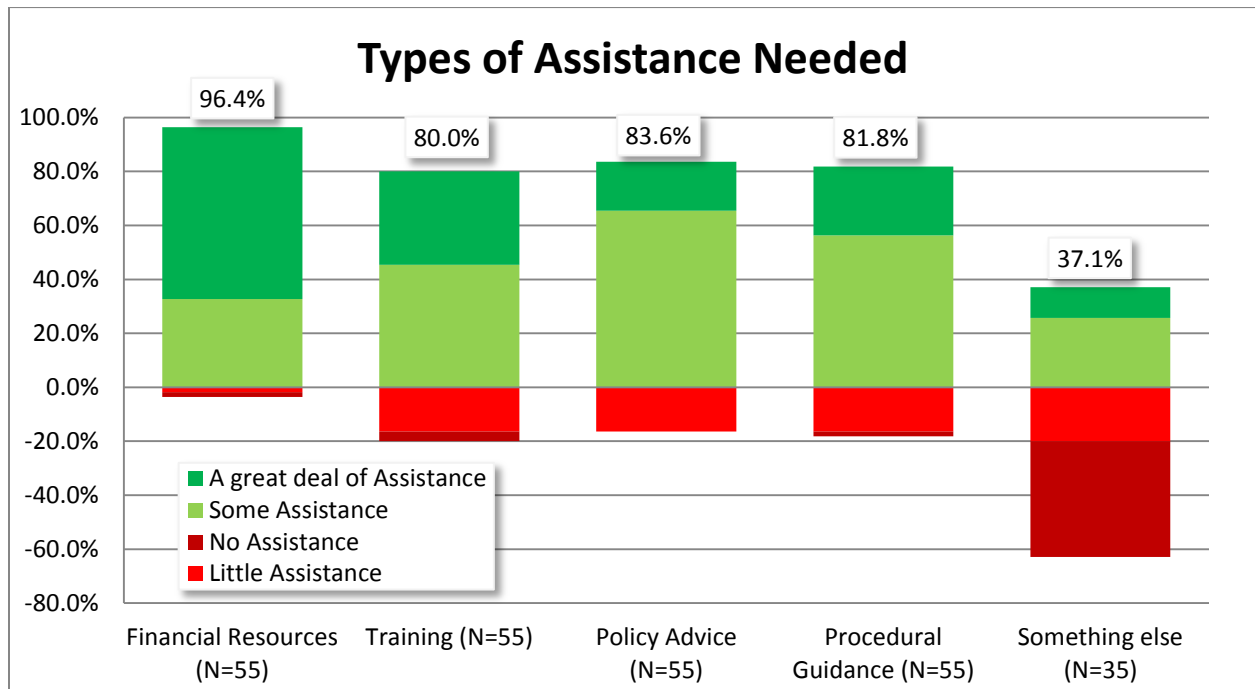
The training to take part in the peer observation process was effective. (N=52)

The training prepared teachers to act upon the feedback received in the peer observation process. (N=52)









Initial Narrative on Significant Focus Group Questions

Because the six Peer Observation Research Grant districts and participants were also required to participate in PGES focus groups as part of their agreement to be in the PGES Pilot, KDE scheduled fewer but targeted Peer Observer Focus Groups to prevent overload and minimize the potential for duplication of data.

Upon an initial reading, KDE chose three questions to share initial findings that are pertinent to districts now.

All districts must produce a Certified Evaluation Plan (CEP) that embeds PGES into its structure and follows a Model Plan guide. Districts will share the approved CEP with schools at the beginning of the school year. The responses to these three questions help schools move beyond understanding the legal, compliance framework of the CEP and into considerations to inform policy, procedure and culture building in schools surrounding the practices of Peer Observation.

Summary and points to consider on select questions:

Overall, what has been your experience with the Peer Observation Protocol you administered?

Teachers and observers saw the use of recorded observations as a helpful tool but concerns about the technology clouded professional growth. Districts and schools should consider the use of existing technology to conduct observations or purchase low cost, off-the-shelf enhancements. Please use the technology decision-making matrix from the [KySTE 2014](#) conference.

Peer Observers viewing recorded observations can reduce the amount of release time from class and reduce the stress of having “outsiders” in a classroom that change dynamics of a class’s culture. Teachers can record themselves teaching and refine their practices in isolation before asking for a peer’s feedback.

The problems encountered with CIITS during the 2013-14 school year helped inform the release scheduled of enhancements. As the technology system continues to evolve, it will become less of the focus of the observation and more of the background tool in which to record the observation.

Cross-district assignment of Peer Observers is still not functional in CIITS. Should districts, schools, and educators desire this functionality, please submit a request to Cathy.White@education.ky.gov. In the meantime, a temporary work around is under consideration and will be presented to districts for the 2014-15 school year.

Did the training help you learn how to give teachers actionable feedback?

Allowing teachers to guide the observation process is key. Empowering teachers to share with peers their expectations from this partnership will allow peers to more effectively tailor their feedback. Peers understood that regular contact built trust. 704 KAR 3:370 requires every teacher to have one Peer Observation during his or her summative cycle; this is a minimum requirement and should not dictate the frequency of peer-teacher contact. [In the Overview of State Teacher Fellows Program in Kentucky](#), the [Hope Street Group's](#) finding was that teachers believed that Peers should observe a teacher 2-3 times a year (page 6).

The cycle of PGES begins with a teacher completing a self-reflection, setting Student Growth Goal(s), and establishing Professional Growth Goals (PGG) in one's Professional Growth Plan (PGP). Peer Observers are keenly aware of their potential impact when working with teachers on achieving their PGGs throughout their summative cycle. Teachers should look to their Peers Observers when engaging in activities to help them reach their PGGs.

How was the feedback used from the Peer Observation?

It is very important for principals to set the tone for successful implementation of Peer Observation as a valued practice. If teachers are to see this source of evidence as useful, it begins with the principal and is then spearheaded by teacher leaders. The Hope Street Group's survey findings show that teachers expect Peer Observers to be professional and a content expert, but overall they want them to be unbiased and to provide constructive feedback. Respondents note that peer observers would benefit from oversight by a committee to promote real reflection for growth on behalf of teachers (pages 16-17).

Principals can outline the expectations and provide oversight to help Peer Observation grow from unbiased, evidence-based observations in EDS to providing feedback to teachers that includes new strategies or resources and help on modifying lessons and improving instruction.

Teachers need transparency of processes and protocols surrounding Peer Observation. Each district decides how peer observers will be selected and the school provides the clarity of that process in how that looks in a particular school.

There is overwhelming agreement that although the *Kentucky Framework for Teaching* shows what good teaching looks like, it is perceived as most beneficial when a Peer Observer can share the same content or grade level as the teacher he or she is observing.

In the "Variations in Selecting Peer Observers" portion of this report, a district's decision to pay their peer observers has been shared in the effort to provide guidance to other districts.

Additional learning for Peer Observers is being considered to augment the current Professional Learning for Peer Observers that is available on KET's Website. ([Overview of HSG](#) page 22)

Focus Group Questions

Overall, what has been your experience with the Peer Observation Protocol you administered?

Fall:

My overall experience is that I have observed two lessons. I have actually only scripted one and I have not yet done the other. It has been a learning experience for me. I have not yet done the post= conference, but I look for it to be a learning experience. I had a problem with the video. We had a bad key and had to use somebody else's key. So, one teacher has two videos instead of both teachers having one. There were issues with ThereNow. When there was a 2 week period during which they sent out bad keys. Our camera is out of commission because it has to have some sort of software update. I think we'll see more positive aspects when we have our post-observation conferences. We are not yet at the point where we see the benefits, but I think we will see some positive aspects.

I'm an observee and am one observation behind. I've only done two. It's good feedback. I feel my second video is better than my first. I saw some things I can work on in my first video. My second video went pretty smoothly, though I have not received my feedback from my observer yet. I have received feedback on the first video. I feel I have showed some gains from the first to the second observation. My concern is with the microphone. I am not sure it is picking up all of the student questions or responses. I have done where the camera and the observer is in the room and one that was just virtual. I received an e-mail about a virtual observer who I do not know, but there was no follow up with that.

Spring:

I think overall the experience has been positive. Some frustrations include those associated with the technology. In CIITS they have not been able to see my comments. People in other districts are unable to see what I wrote. There is one teacher I am supposed to be working with who has not been able to get me a video. With the teachers I work with, it has been very positive. Through conversations I had, we were able to share information and give good feedback.

In some respect I feel that I learned more than I ever thought in this process. I have the same frustrations with CIITS and the way I rectified that was to copy and paste it into an e-mail. The CIITS piece...I spent tons of time trying to get the problem resolved. I know they worked on it, but it was never resolved. It never seemed to be fixed and it was frustrating. On the virtual observation piece, once people got comfortable with the camera, it was good. It worked well for the teachers I worked with a lot. I learned more than I thought I would doing this.

Did the Training help you learn how to give teachers actionable feedback?

Fall:

I have the opportunity to observe the people three different times, and I can already tell we are feeling more comfortable with each other. I am interested in seeing how that relationship develops. It is difficult in the beginning when you don't have that professional relationship together, though I can see how that is already changing.

I don't know that it taught me. Some of my years being an observer helped me. It did help me match the feedback to the standards.

I think that the idea is to ask guiding questions to get the teachers themselves to get ideas to improve their lessons.

Especially if we gave them feedback on their PGPs. We were even able to discuss what we were going to look at on the next observation.

How was the feedback used from the Peer Observation?

Fall:

I read what she wrote. I was able to take it back with me and make decisions based on what we talked about. Regarding whether I should implement what she said into my daily practice, I used it if I felt it was valuable.

With the evidence-gathering, it shows strengths and weaknesses. IT gives you a chance to reflect. It gave me some points to improve and it showed me my strengths.

Spring:

I would say that I used it like any other feedback you receive from a learning log or a 5-minute visit from your principal. I tried to think and reflect on how to incorporate my feedback to make my teaching better.

I only got feedback on one lesson, but I was able to use it. I kind of changed some things based on the feedback.

My feedback from my internal peer observation was not what I was hoping for. IT was incomplete. My virtual observer gave me complete feedback. They were able to give me feedback that I did not see, but were very positive. My [internal] peer observer was a kindergarten teacher and I am not. I teach 5th and 6th grade and my virtual observer was a middle school teacher. IT was easy for my virtual peer to give better feedback because he was more familiar with the setting. It was very difficult because we were in different districts. That's a glitch that needs to be worked on.

Variations in Selecting Peer Observers

Districts and schools were not provided processes or procedures in choosing peer observers or in assigning peers to teachers. The application sent to Virtual Observers was provided to them to use as a template.

The considerations provided to districts in the development of those processes were:

- 1) consider how the district will replicate this process in the future
- 2) how peer observers are selected this year should result in a pool that builds capacity next year
- 3) consider processes and application that provide career pathways for teacher leaders in your district and school

Once decided upon, relay that process to KDE to share with districts.

The following report was created from those submitted processes and will be distributed to districts in the October 2014 PGES Newsletter.

Districts modify practices based on their needs and desire examples on which to base their decision-making. What follows are some initial findings from the Peer Observation Research Grant to aid in that regard. Listed below are three examples of selection methods for Peer Observers and one example of Peer Observer roles and responsibilities.

Please direct questions/comments regarding these findings to Christine.Boatwright@education.ky.gov

District A: Selection of Peer Observers

The superintendent appointed a Selection Committee, consisting of the district liaisons to each of the district's six schools

The Selection Committee agreed on the following selection criteria:

- similar [to PGES pilot/field test participants] in grade level and content
- exemplary teacher based on student results**
- area of specialization
- years of experience
- familiarity with schools and staff
- familiarity with PGES*
- effective communication skills**
- perceived as leader by peers**

Criteria with asterisks were weighted more heavily, but still our ranking was holistic. Every school did not have to have a peer observer.

Liaisons reviewed applications and ranked the top nine applications individually. The nine applicants receiving the highest number of "votes" were selected to serve as peer observers. The three applicants receiving the next highest number were named alternates.

District B: Selection of Peer Observers

For the purposes of the Peer Observer Research Grant during the PGES Pilot, it was decided that the Kentucky Department of Education leads would be the participants. All department leads were tenured and none were in their evaluation year. After initial training, the group discussed the expectations of both observees and observers, and four of the department leads chose to be peer observers.

All peer observers completed the training module individually.

The process used to match peer with teachers followed a pattern similar to matching KTIP Interns with KTIP resource teachers. First, we tried same subject, same school, and then we went to same subject, different school.

District C: Selection of Peer Observers

Peer observers chosen at school level based on the following criteria:

- four years teaching experience
- good communication skills and respected by staff members
- effective technology skills
- complete an application process/interview, principal makes the recommendation to SBDM and hires

Elementary (could possibly be scaled down)

- 1 Primary, 1 Intermediate, 1 Science at both BES and CES
- 1 Primary, 1 Intermediate, 1 Science shared between JES and SMMS
- 1 Primary, 1 Intermediate, 1 Science shared between SES, and CCES
- 1 Media Specialist, 1 Arts/Humanities Teacher, 1 PE, 1 Special Education teacher shared among all elementary schools

Middle- (could possibly be scaled down)

- 1 Math, 1 Science, 1 Language Arts, 1 Social Studies shared between BMS and SMMS
- 1 Math, 1 Science, 1 Language Arts, 1 Social Studies at NMMS
- 1 Practical Living/Voc. Studies, 1 Arts/Humanities, 1 PE, 1 Special Education shared between all middle schools

High School- (could possibly be scaled down)

- Department Chairs

District C: Peer Observer Roles and Responsibilities

Peer observers:

- attend six hours of training prior to observing to learn the *Framework for Teaching* and learning appropriate pre- and post-conversation during conferencing
- mentor any new teacher assigned to them based on the content area/grade levels they teach; pre-conference/observe/post-conference with each new teacher on their caseload four times a year, once per quarter.
- complete requirements of peer observation for PGES for teachers in summative year

- provide aid in a pre-conference, observation and post-conference to any teacher in their content area/grade level, if asked by principal
- no more than five teachers, new teachers and PGES teachers combined, on a caseload in one year
- will receive data from a perception survey given to each member on caseload and will be evaluated by the principal annually to determine peer observer effectiveness
- will video a post-conference to share with instructional supervisor to provide feedback on post-conference process

Compensation:

- Any time spent in training outside of the school day will be paid a per hour rate based on rank.
- For each PGES pre-observation, observation (face-to-face or digital) and post-observation, the peer observer will receive a \$100 stipend. PGES requires one per year, per teacher, in the summative evaluation year.
- Peer observers may be assigned as a new teacher mentor if there is a new teacher hired in the content area/grade levels they are assigned. For each new teacher on a peer observer caseload, the peer observer will receive a \$600 stipend.
- If a principal requests support for any other teacher by the means of a pre-conference, observation, and post-conference the peer observer will receive \$100 for each observation.
- Peer observers will receive 4 days of release time per year, 1 each quarter.

Data Used to Establish Estimated Cost:

- New teacher support from a peer observer total of \$12,000 total
 - District historically has 20 new hires a year.
 - Observer earns \$600 for each new hire
- Estimated 100 teachers who will need a peer observation for summative year- total \$10,500
- \$25,000 is reserved in Title II for this process

Principal Considerations:

- The choice is critical. Principal will hire and make the recommendation to SBDM.
- Principal presents this process to all teachers; take teacher recommendations of people they believe would be a good fit for this role.
- Anyone can apply but the principal will primarily consider teacher recommendations when selecting candidates.
- If a teacher is frequently recommended by peers but is not interested, the principal will use professional judgment to determine whether a conversation should be held to request that that teacher reconsider the role of Peer Observer.
- Peer observers will be hired by June 4 if at all possible
- Training occurs in the first 30 days of school. Possibly in 3 two-hour sessions after school.

District Reflections on Travel

Each district was to travel to another state to shadow and learn from them about their practices for peer observation and the use of technology to support the process. Five of the six districts in the research grant were able to complete the travel requirement and produced reflections that will contribute to their own peer observation process.

One purpose of the travel was to learn from the experiences and practices of other states. Each one of the states had based its peer observation practices on the research conducted by the MET study. With that common research-base, there are still widely differing practices both in the use of peer observation and the technology used to support digital observation. Another purpose was for districts' learning and experiences to be shared with the other districts in Kentucky to build capacity. Either by sharing their travel reflections in their entirety or by quoting specific passages in directed communications, Kentucky's districts rely upon the experiences of others during the development and refinement of their Certified Evaluation Plans for the 2014-15 school year and beyond.

Kentucky may stand alone in the practice of using Peer Observation as a formative assessment, but districts learned a great deal from their travel to other states who have integrated Peer Observation into their evaluation systems.

To prepare districts for this travel requirement, KDE conducted preliminary research to determine which states and districts would be willing to accommodate our Research Grant participants. First KDE determined a pool of states that were noted as having a peer observation process most similar to that of Kentucky's. Once those states were identified, calls were placed to the state departments of education which led to the collection of recommended school districts and to the outreach efforts to specific leaders.

Contacts are provided:

Location: Michigan
Contact: Mary Esselman, Ph.D.
Website: <http://teacheaa.org/team.html>

Location: Trousdale County (Hartsville) TN, near Nashville.
Contact: Mr. Clint Satterfield
Website: <http://www.tcschools.org/>

Location: Tampa, FL - Hillsborough
Contact: Danni Resnick

Location: Baltimore Md.
Contact: Baltimore City Public Schools

Location: Tampa, FL - Hillsborough
Contact Dr. Jonathan H. Grantham, Principal

Location: Tampa, Florida – Hillsborough
Contact: Jareaux Washington (ja-row)
Website: <http://rolandpark.mysdhc.org/administration>
<http://rolandpark.mysdhc.org/>

Location: Memphis Tennessee
Contact: Monica Jordan, Coordinator of reflective practice and teacher support, Shelby County Schools; E-mail: JORDANMW@scsk12.org

Added Info: Article: Memphis City Schools Selects Teachscape Video Solution to Augment Teacher Effectiveness Initiative <http://www.teachscape.com/about/press-and-news/2013/memphis-city-schools-selects-teachscape-video-solution-to-augment-teacher-effectiveness-initiative.html>

The following hyperlinked contact list shows each participating district's reflection on travel. All districts were provided guidance in producing reflections that could serve a dual purpose; the finalized reflections are intended to be of use to them and quotable by KDE to share with other districts in the state.

[Fleming](#): Newsletter

[Jessamine](#): Reflection

[Marshall](#): Excerpt from longer interview. Entire transcript not included

[Magoffin](#): Reflection

[Gallatin](#): Reflection